DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 102 PS 020 720

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TITLE Relationships and Development: Family Adaptation to Individual Change.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHHS), Rockville, Md.
PUB DATE Sep 91
NOTE 55p.; Paper presented at the Tel Aviv Conference on Human Development (Tel Aviv, Israel, September 1-6, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Development; *Adolescents; Age Differences; *Attitude Change; Behavior Change; Behavior Theories; Expectation; *Family Problems; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; Research Needs; Sex Differences

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the effects of developmental changes that occur in the transition from childhood to adolescence on parent-child relationships. The first section considers four theoretical approaches to changes in relationships during the transition to adolescence. Noted especially are perspectives regarding the impetus for changes in relationships, the elements of relationships that are most likely to be affected, the course of change, and the significance of changes in relationships for the subsequent development of each person involved. The second section outlines an integrative perspective on the nature of changes in parent-adolescent relations. According to this perspective, physical, social, and cognitive changes in offspring give rise to difficulties between parents and children during the transition to adolescence because the changes violate expectancies that mediate interactions in parent-child relationships. The third section provides an overview of initial findings from research guided by this perspective, including studies of: (1) the role of age in parents' and offsprings' patterns of perceptions of behavior; (2) discrepancies between perceptions of behavior and expectancies regarding typical or ideal behavior; and (3) the linkage of adolescents' and parents' perceptions and expectancies to other aspects of their relationships. The final section covers several issues concerning conceptual and empirical advances in the understanding of adaptation to ontogenetic change in parent-adolescent relationships. A reference list of 92 items is provided. (AC)

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RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPMENT:

FAMILY ADAPTATION TO INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

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Chapter presented at the Tel Aviv Conference on Human Development, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 1-6, 1991. Preparation of the chapter was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to the author. Gratitude is expressed to Ray Montemayor, Nancy Leffert, Coral Luebker, Pedra Meeks, Neisha Nelson, Nelson Soken, and Signe Andenas for helpful comments on an earlier version of this material.

This paper addresses the question of how parent-child relationships are affected by ontogenetic changes in the participants. The developmental changes of particular interest are those that occur in the transition from childhood to adolescence. As with parent-child relationships in other periods of life, most research has focused on the impact of variations in parent-child interactions on adolescents' personality characteristics and social and intellectual competence. The question of how families adapt to the changing capacities and needs of their offspring has received little attention.

Although common theoretical and popular views emphasize disruption in parent-child relationships at puberty, most research findings indicate that parents continue to be significant sources of influence during adolescence (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1985, 1986; Hill, 1988; Rutter, Graham, Chadwick, & Yule, 1976). Studies of reported influence consistently show that adolescents have high regard for their parents (for reviews see Hill, 1987; Steinberg, 1990). Furthermore, as in other periods of life, positive emotional expression, openness to communication, but firm guidelines for behavior and a teaching orientation are associated both with continuing positive relationships between parents and adolescents and with adolescents' competence and adaptivity (e.g., Baumrind, 1989; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986).

These generally positive relations co-exist with a variety of specific changes in relationships (for reviews see Collins & Russell, 1991; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Changes include increased assertiveness by both parents and children (e.g., Hill, Holmbeck, Marlow, Green, & Lynch, 1985a,b; Jacob, 1974; Steinberg, 1981; Steinberg & Hill, 1978), increased emotional and behavioral distance (Hill et al., 1985a,b; Holmbeck & Hill,

1991; Montemayor, 1983; Steinberg, 1987, 1988), decreased expressions of physical affection and positive feelings among family members (Hill, 1988; Papini & Sebby, 1987; Steinberg, 1988), adjustments in the amount and kind of influence children exert in family decision-making (e.g., Jacob, 1974); and increasing congruency in parents' perceptions of their adolescent offspring and adolescents' self-perceptions (Alessandri & Wozniak, 1987, 1989) and in parents' and adolescents' views of appropriate parental jurisdiction over adolescents' behavior (Smetana, 1988).

These changes in modes or styles of interaction, in the context of continuity in emotional connections, imply that parents and adolescents make gradual adjustments that enable families to move gradually toward more symmetrical power structures and different patterns of exchange as their offspring mature (Collins, 1990; Melito, 1985). A goal of this chapter is to consider the processes by which these adaptations occur.

The chapter has four sections. The first considers four theoretical approaches on changes in relationships during the transition to adolescence. Noted especially are the perspectives taken within each approach regarding the impetus for changes in relationships, the elements of relationships that are most likely to be affected, the course of change, and the significance of changes in relationships for subsequent development of each person involved. The second section outlines an integrative perspective on the nature and processes of changes in parent-adolescent relationships. The third section is an overview of initial findings from research guided by this perspective. In the fourth section, several issues are discussed that are important for further conceptual and empirical advances in understanding adaptation to ontogenetic change in parent-adolescent relationships.

Conceptual Perspectives on Parent-Adolescent Relationship Change

Theoretical perspectives on parent-adolescent relationships commonly reflect the assumption that interactions are different in late adolescence and young adulthood than in middle childhood, but accounts vary as to how this change is initiated and what elements and processes are involved. The main dimension of variation concerns views of the impetus for change; i.e., whether changes in relationships represent adaptation to pubertal maturation (psychoanalytic, ego psychology, and evolutionary theories), cognitive maturation (primarily, cognitive-developmental views), or intensified environmental stressors resulting from age-graded transitions and expectations (sociological and social-learning views). In the section below, each of these theoretical approaches is also reviewed with respect to the elements or aspects of relationships with respect to which change is especially likely to be manifested, the course of change, or the de-stabilizations and re-stabilizations that are likely to occur, and the significance of relationship change for adolescent development.

Relationship Change as an Adaptation to Pubertal Maturation

The most extensive theoretical treatments emphasize the role of pubertal maturation in precipitating conflicts and emotional distancing. Included in this category are psychoanalytic, ego psychology, and ethological approaches.

Impetus for change. Both Sigmund Freud (1949) and Anna Freud (1969) assumed that hormonal changes and subsequent surgence of sexual excitation at puberty increase difficulties in impulse control. Distancing from parents through rebelliousness and devaluation were seen as facilitating ego and superego controls in the face of these strong pressures from the

id. In more recent psychoanalytic formulations (e.g., Blos, 1979; Lidz, 1969) puberty has also been seens as precipitating psychic pressure for individuation from parents, which gives rise to autonomy-striving in preparation for fulfilling the demands of adult roles. In the words of Lidz (1969):

> Although freeing the self from dependency on parents, loosening the libidinal attachments to them, and modifying the superego for adult living are largely intrapsychic tasks, they are usually carried out via alterations in behavior toward the parents whose directives were the original sources of the superego (p. 108).

Concomitant with these aspects of control and autonomy-striving are the issues of personal integration and mastery encompassed by Erikson's (1968) concept of ego identity.

Evolutionary views (Belsky, Steinberg, & Draper, 1991; Steinberg, 1989) also emphasize the motivational force of autonomy-striving. In this perspective, difficulties in parent-child relationships at puberty facilitate formation of sexual relationships outside of the family and, particularly for males, foster the socialization of autonomy. Steinberg (1989) has argued that the relation of puberty to family perturbations may be bidirectional, with pubertal changes being facilitated or intensified by family conflict and, conversely, impeded by family closeness.

In both formulations, the impetus for change from the parents' side is only implicit, whereas parental motivations to main the status quo are more explicit (Chodorow, 1978). In Erikson's (1950) psychosocial perspective, changes in parents are viewed as an adaptation to decreasing dependence of children.

Elements of relationships. These views give special importance to the affective tone and felt closeness of parent-child exchanges. Autonomy-striving, including perceived parental strictures on independence and adolescents' anxiety about their ability to fill adult roles, should also be affected. Interpersonal conflicts should increase as adolescents attempt to exercise adult-like instrumental (especially for males) or expressive-affectional (for females) roles in the family. Moreover, the psychoanalytic emphasis on devaluation (in Blos's term, deidealization) of parents implies changes in attitude toward or confidence in parents as models and guides for action.

On the parents' side, satisfaction with children and with the parent role should be affected. Negative emotionality may also increase. In Erikson's (1950) perspective, a resurgence of parental identity issues might accompany the shift from responding to dependent children toward an "empty nest" (Aldous, 1978).

Course of change. The process of change implied by these formulations is a dynamic one, with fluctuations in levels of interpersonal difficulties throughout the early and middle adolescent years. Based on the hypothesis of hormonal disruption, the most pronounced parent-child conflict and anxiety should coincide with the most intense periods of pubertal change, although the evolutionary viewpoint suggests that pubertal change follows, rather than precedes, intensified relationship perturbations. The emphasis on autonomy-striving makes this prediction less straightforward, however, because pressures on relationships should be partly determined by the salience of role opportunities and demands in proximity to physical change. These theories typically predict that difficulties will co-exist with

continued affection and respect between parents and offspring, although this condition is least apparent in early psychoanalytic writings.

A general prediction is that difficulties will be less common in late adolescence. Some theorists, however, contend that tension might recur in middle to late adolescence. For example, Chodorow (1978) hypothesized that, at a time when daughters have passed through an initial rebellion and are attempting to negotiate a new connectedness, mothers may project their own emotional needs onto the daughter, creating tension in the relationship.

Significance of change. The developmental significance of the destabilization and restabilization of relationships is that adolescents complete the transition from dependence to relative independence, psychically prepared to assume adult roles. For parents these transformational processes may involve a recurrence of identity issues, as described in Erikson's notions of generativity and ego integrity. Thus, testing the dynamic processes entailed by these theories should go beyond measurement of interactions and affective variables to assess autonomy-striving, cognitive constructs relevant to the deidealization of parents, and ego-identity processes in parents.

Relationship Changes as Sequelae of Cognitive Maturation

In a second group of ideas, changes in interpersonal relations, including those between parents and children, are attributed to cognitive changes of the sort implied by Piaget's distinction between concrete-operational and formal-operational thought. Most of these formulations are based on the idea that structural changes in cognitive capacities mediate interpersonal behavior in some fashion (e.g., Kohlberg, 1969; Selman, 1980).

Impetus for change. Several specific predictions have been advanced linking parent-child interactions to logical thought capacities, increasingly abstract and complex reasoning, and distinctions among domains of social functioning. First, increasingly reciprocal views of parent-child relationships (Selman, 1980) may affect the degree to which children believe it is appropriate to assert their own opinions in response to parental views and wishes. A corollary is that offspring become increasingly aware that parents are fallible and that mother and father are individuals with needs and commitments apart from their parental roles (Blos, 1979; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Second, conceptual advances may increase the discrepancies between parents' and children's views of the issues that frequently arise between them. Smetana (1988) has recently reported that adolescents come to view aspects of behavior that were previously thought to be under parental jurisdiction as rightly being under their own personal jurisdiction. These perceptions conflict with parents' concepts of the same behaviors as matters of social convention over which parent should continue to exercise jurisdiction.

Implicit in cognitive views is the idea that contentious exchanges with parents both stimulate and are stimulated by development of social and relational concepts. A number of studies (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Walker & Taylor, 1991) have shown that the growth-stimulating effects of parent-child conflict depends on engagement of parent and child in resolving disagreements. Conditions especially important to constructive engagement include openness to the other person's viewpoint, a warm, accepting manner, and clear articulation of opposing opinions (for a review, see Collins & Laursen, 1992).

Elements of change. Cognitive-developmental perspectives draw attention to several components that are not ordinarily considered to be inherent in relationships. Of these the most important are the degree of mutuality and reciprocity in representations of self and other. For example, adolescents' capacities for mutual responsiveness might increase as their concepts of interpersonal relationships more adequately encompass the needs and desires of both parties. This might be reflected in feelings of reciprocal concern, respect for each other's opinions and viewpoints in problem-solving, and so forth.

In the cognitive-mediational perspective, these representations are specific instances of more general cognitive structures pertaining to social relationships. Thus, both general and specific cognitive assessments may be necessary to encompass the cognitive states that are presumed to mediate changes in social interaction and relationships. The hypothesis of cognitive mediation of interpersonal change also implies that the intervening cognitive changes should be assessed independently of interactional changes. Thus far, few researchers have assessed cognitive changes separately from the interpersonal changes that they are presumed to affect (Laursen & Collins, 1988; but see Smetana, this volume, for a recent example of such research).

Course of change. Cognitive formulations imply a sequence of changes corresponding to the course of cognitive maturation. In Elkind's (1967) view, for example, the early phases of the transition to formal thought are associated with emergence of perturbations; but as formal reasoning is more fully realized, reality-testing and the development of greater mutuality in concepts of interpersonal relationships mediates more harmonious relations (see also Selman, 1980). In Smetana's view (1988), cyclical periods of

disruption in interpersonal interactions are expected, because of the presumed alternation of negativistic and more affirmative orientations across time as cognitive development proceeds. Although these formulations imply a cubic function linking cognitive change and relationship difficulties, most longitudinal data are likely to show an inverted U-shape function, the two ends of which reflect different levels of cognitive maturity.

Cognitive-developmental approaches generally imply that adult functioning is the endpoint of childhood and adolescent cognitive changes (although some formulations posit further changes in adulthood). Consequently, parental cognitive development has not been viewed as a factor in change in parent-adolescent relationships. Clearly, parents accommodate existing schemas to extensive changes in their offspring during the transition to adolescence. Thus, for parents, change in relationships may involve an equilibration process, in Piagetian terminology. Discrepancies between expectancies of ideal adolescents and their perceptions of their own offspring may represent the discrepant cues to which parents must accommodate (Collins, 1991).

Significance of change. Central to the theoretical writing on this topic is the hypothesis that relatively smooth, harmonious interactions are a desirable developmental outcome, representing a balanced conceptual representation of self and other within the social system (Kohlberg, 1969). Changes in parent-child relationships are significant primarily as an instance of bidirectional influence between interpersonal and conceptual development.

Relationship Changes as Sequelae of Shifts in Environmental Demands and Intensification of Stressors

Social-psychological theories view family perturbations as a reflection of the multiple stressors engendered by the transition to adolescence (Lewin, 1939; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Also included in this category are social-learning formulations (Bandura, 1964) and perspectives from cultural anthropology (e.g., Benedict, 1938). This viewpoint has been extended by family-development theorists (e.g., Aldous, 1978; Combrinck-Graham, 1985; R. Hill, 1964), who regard life-cycle changes during adolescence as affecting the individual development of both parents and children (Combrinck-Graham, 1985; Wynne, 1984).

Impetus for change. The extensiveness of the transition is due partly to maturational factors and partly to environmental ones. The maturational component comes from the physical changes of puberty and the social expectations and prohibitions accompanying physical maturity. Environmental pressures result from the transitions in tasks and settings that result from age-graded social organizations and expectations.

These transitions entail new opportunities and demands for adolescents. In addition, some transitions also invoke different expectations for males and females that may be intensified during particular changes (e.g., abruptly lower tolerance for "tomboyish" behavior for girls at puberty) (Hill & Lynch, 1983). These discontinuities in development require "unlearning" and new learning that may complicate individual adaptation (Bandura, 1964; Benedict, 1938). Maturational changes and age-graded shifts in tasks and settings can combine to affect psychosocial adaptation more strongly than either alone. A well documented example is the deleterious effects on seventh-grade girls' self-esteem when

peak pubertal changes coincide with both dating and the transition from elementary to junior high school (Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Simmons, Burgeson, & Reef, 1988).

The impact on family relationships has two major sources. One is increased ambient anxiety and tension from coping with these multiple transitions. Some difficulties of adjusting to the world beyond the family affect family interactions, perhaps because family provides a relatively safe setting for expressing bewilderment, anger, and frustration that cannot readily be expressed with others (Hartup, 1979; Youniss, 1980). The second is the pressure to diminish dependency on the family in order to adapt successfully to extra-family settings, opportunities, and demands (Brooks-Gunn, Petersen, & Eichorn, 1985; Lerner, 1985). In this respect, independence-striving is similar to the autonomy-striving motivations addressed by psychoanalytic and ego theorists, but refers to exogenous rather than endogenous determinants.

In contrast to perspectives emphasizing pubertal maturation, social-psychological views attribute more importance to age-related social-structural transitions. Of particular significance is the degree to which an individual's pubertal maturation deviates from the time when most individuals of the same age are undergoing those changes and the direction of the deviation, thus making the impact of puberty relative to age.

From the parents' side, pressures stem from life course concerns associated with middle age (e.g., Combrinck-Graham, 1985; Rossi, 1987). Among these are biological changes, such as reproductive status, sexuality, and physical virility and attractiveness, and age-related expectations for occupational achievement and role issues (e.g., Rossi, 1981, 1987). The

convergence of life-course issues across the two generations has been cited frequently as a likely source of perturbation in parent-adolescent relationships (e.g., Hill, 1987; Rossi, 1987). In views emphasizing developmental changes in family systems (e.g., Combrinck-Graham, 1985; Wynne, 1964), this link is consistent with the idea that family systems optimally adapt to circumstances arising both from life-course changes (e.g., adolescent's striving for independence) and from environmental demands (e.g., parents' orientation to paid work role) (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1990).

Elements of change. Formulations that emphasize psychological effects of social-structural change also focus on psychosocial variables that may contribute to conflicts and negative affect in parent-child interactions. The psychosocial variables of most common interest are self-esteem, valuing of independence, and perceived independence. Also of interest are measures of perceived acceptance, methods of control, and implicit timetables for "acting older" (Collins, 1992; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Parental role confusion and satisfaction are also relevant to the transitions of this period (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1990; Wynne, 1984).

Course of change. The nature and course of relationship change is not addressed specifically. The underlying assumption, however, is that the multiple adaptations of the period may necessitate changes toward modes of interaction that are consistent with more adult-like, socially autonomous offspring. Parental role satisfaction, life satisfaction, life stress, and future orientation also indicate the impact of life-cycle changes. Although the social-psychological viewpoint, like other perspectives, implies an increase and then a decrease of interpersonal difficulties from early to late adolescence, the expected course is more episodic than other

theories would imply. From the perspective of social age-grading, this episodic pattern would reflect periodic age-graded transitions; from a family-systems development perspective, episodic change would recur with normative changes in family status (e.g., from couple with extensive child-care responsibilities to couple with more autonomous offspring).

An alternative, but conceptually consistent, prediction is that early adolescence might be the primary period of change, with gradual re-stabilization as appropriate accommodations are made to transitional status, although individual variation will occur as a function of timing of puberty. Some researchers (e.g., Hill, 1988) have suggested that very early pubertal timing for girls may result in long-lasting perturbations in relationships, but the reasons for a different pattern of resolution for this group than other groups are not based in theory.

Significance of change. As with other theoretical perspectives, the underlying assumption in social-psychological views is that maintaining psychosocial health as a foundation for adult role attainment and performance is primary to the developmental significance of relationship change. Change in relationships signifies progressive adaptation to new social structures and social goals. Simmons and Blyth (1987) have suggested that a stable family environment might provide an arena of comfort to help adolescents cope with changes in other settings, implying that transitory contentiousness might function as a pressure valve in coping with stress.

Summary Comment

These general views underscore the intensity and extensiveness of changes to which individuals and families must adapt. Psychoanalytic

perspectives emphasize affective perturbation, conflictual interactions, and psychosocial uncertainty, ascribing changes in these aspects of relationships to a synergy between social-role demands and psychic events triggered by pubertal maturation. Cognitive perspectives call attention to the degree of convergence of the conceptual bases for interaction and the likelihood of greater reciprocity and mutuality of interpersonal concepts. Social-psychological formulations attribute altered interactions and affective perturbations to the intrusion of behavior patterns from new settings experienced by adolescents and also to the emotional stress associated with multiple adaptations to age-graded social structures and expectations. All three imply difficulties in early adolescence, although all also acknowledge the potential for recurrent tensions through late adolescence. In general, all also depict interpersonal difficulties as contributing to positive adaptation of family relationships in the face of adolescents' changing capacities and predilections.

An Integrative Approach to Change in Parent-Adolescent Relationships

The model that underlies the analysis of relationship change discussed in this paper encompasses elements from the psychoanalytic, cognitive, and social-psychological perspectives on adolescent development and relationship change. In this view, physical, social, and cognitive changes in offspring, whether exogenously or endogenously caused, give rise to difficulties between parents and children during the transition to adolescence largely because these changes entail frequent violations of expectancies that mediate interactions in parent-child relationships. These perturbations in turn provide an impetus for both parents and children to form new age-appropriate expectancies, behaviors, and responses with respect to their interactions.

As an example of how violations of expectancies might occur, consider a preadolescent child who has typically been compliant and easy to manage, but begins more frequently to question, or seek rationales for, parents' demands. From the child's side, this behavior may reflect any one of a number of sources associated with early adolescent transitions: for example, the behavior might reflect experiences in other social settings like the middle-school classroom or the peer group, where questioning and challenging are typical; or it may indicate partial, but not yet fully realized, concepts of reciprocity and mutuality in parent-child relations. Regardless, to the parents, this behavior will probably seem resistant, even insolent, because it is a departure from the child's usual compliant behavior; and they may respond by applying extra pressure for compliance. For both the child and the parents, the violations of expected behavior and the negative exchanges and emotions that may follow them may result, over time, both in modification of expectancies and behaviors toward one another. I could give more positive examples as well, as when a child manifests incipient maturity earlier than parents had expected, or when adolescents are granted autonomy in some area even before they themselves begin to press for it because parents judge that they are "old enough." In terms of relationships, then, both positive and negative expectancy violations may stimulate *bilateral realignment* of expectancies that transform, but do not subvert, bonds between parents and adolescents.

Expectancies: Mediators of Relationships and Relationship Change

This approach links normative difficulties in parent-adolescent relationships to the processes that characterize parent-child interactions

generally. Relationships between parents and children are close, in that they are typified by frequent, highly interdependent action sequences across diverse settings and tasks over a considerable period of time (Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1987; Kelley et al., 1983). In the case of parents and offspring, these interdependencies are natural products of shared histories and complementary roles.

Two corollary points underlie a consideration of parent-child relationship changes in adolescence:

(1) Parent-child interdependencies are mediated by expectancies, or complex schemata of thought, action, and emotion that affect the perception and interpretation of behavior and that, therefore, guide actions and reactions in interpersonal relationships. The expectancies that underlie functional relationships between parents and children undoubtedly differ in content and complexity at different times in the lifespan, but little is known about the processes by which parents and children form different expectancies for each other in one period from those they held in earlier life periods.

(2) When interdependent sequences are interrupted by behavior that is inconsistent with expectancies, both interactional (e.g., conflict) and emotional (e.g., expression of negative affect, decreased satisfaction) perturbations can occur (Berscheid, 1983).

Studies of the relation between expectancies and interaction have repeatedly found that pre-existing expectancies affect perceptions of and attributions about persons and events and emotional and behavioral responses in relationships (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Markus & Zajonc, 1985; Patterson, 1982). In parent-adolescent relationships, rapid cognitive, socioemotional, and physical changes during

the transition to adolescence often result in distortions of interpersonal perceptions and attributions by both parents and offspring. These distorted perceptions and attributions, in turn, stimulate parents and children to generate and coordinate new expectancies that are appropriate to the more symmetrical structures and co-regulatory processes of parent-adolescent relationships (e.g., Blos, 1979; A. Freud, 1969; Hill & Holmbeck, 1986; Steinberg, 1987; Youniss & Smollar, 1985).

Figure 1 about here

Figure 1 is a simple diagram of the elements that contribute to change in relationships. Taking individual changes in adolescents as a starting point, violations of expectancy become more likely, temporarily disrupting the on-going interdependency of the parent-child dyad. Conflict and aroused affect motivate some adjustment of expectancies by one or both members of the dyad, with the possibility of more positive (or at least less negative) interactions between them. The maintenance of positive interpersonal bonds then has implications for beneficial psychosocial growth. Psychosocial growth fostered in the family may generate pressure toward further adaptations in relationships as adolescents mature.

Pubertal and Social-Structural Change: Instigators of Relationship Change

Although expectancy violations stimulate adaptation of relationships to developmental changes, the instigators of adaptation are pubertal maturation and age-related social-structural changes. Parents' responses to pubertal status generally indicate greatest interpersonal difficulty in the middle of the pubertal cycle. Timing of puberty (early vs. late) has been

shown repeatedly to be a factor in adult and peer ratings of social success and social and emotional maturity and in adolescents' own self-esteem and satisfaction (for reviews, see Collins & Laursen, 1992; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Similarly, age is a powerful determinant of both expectancies (Collins, Schoenleber, & Westby, 1987; Rogoff et al. 1975) and behavior patterns (e.g., Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Gross, Martin, Jennings, Rosenberg, & Duke, 1981). Previous researchers, however, have not disentangled effects of age and pubertal status in contributing to expectancies, expectancy violations, and adaptation in relationships.

The model proposed above reflects the necessity for adaptation of parent-child relationships to both pubertal maturation and age-graded opportunities and expectations. This biopsychosocial approach to adolescent development (Lerner & Foch, 1987; Petersen, 1988) potentially bridges correlational studies of linkages between family environment and developmental outcomes in adolescence and research on age and maturational differences in family interaction patterns, cognitive capacities, and psychosocial status.

Expectancies and Parent-Adolescent Relations: Some Initial Evidence

At the Institute of Child Development, we have conducted cross-sectional studies to examine several initial questions derived from this approach regarding perceptions and expectancies held by parents and children at different ages during the transition to adolescence. To address these questions, we (Collins, 1990; Johnson & Collins, 1988; Schoenleber & Collins, 1988) have studied 385 subjects in grades 5, 8, and 11 (ages 11, 14, and 17) and 69 pairs of parents of a subsample of these subjects (22-24 pairs in each of the three grades). The sample, drawn from a middle-class community in the midwestern United States, is not

representative of the U. S. population, in that more than 95 percent of the adolescents were Caucasian and 81 percent came from families in which the parents were the original marriage partners. The sample was purposely limited to provide a relatively restricted set of social and cultural conditions under which the patterns of expectancies and correlates of parent-child relationships in different age groups could be studied.

In this section, I first discuss research on age-related patterns of perceptions of actual behavior for both parents and offspring. Next, I turn to the question of discrepancies between these perceptions and expectancies regarding typical and ideal, or highly desired, behavior. Finally, I discuss some suggestive initial findings about the linkage of adolescents' and parents' perceptions and expectancies to other aspects of their relationships.

Adolescents' and Parents' Perceptions of the Others' Behavior

The first question was whether parents' perceptions of offspring and offspring's perceptions of parents vary as a function of age during the transition to adolescence. To address this question, we used inventories of behavioral descriptors. For adolescents, the measure of perceptions of parent behavior was the Child's Report of Parent Behavior (Schaefer, 1965). This inventory required children and adolescents to respond to 56 items about parents' childrearing practices, affect, and typical responses to offspring. The items were chosen to assess perceptions that might be expected to affect responses to parents in family interactions; they were not presumed to give a veridical account of parents' actual behavior. Subjects completed the items for both mothers and fathers. The response options were "usually like" or "usually not like" the target. For parents,

the measure of perceptions was the Behavior Expectancies Inventory (Collins et al., 1987), an instrument developed for use in this project to assess expectancies regarding behaviors that are commonly thought to change between the ages of 11 and 16. Each parent separately completed the inventory with respect to their own son or daughter. There were four response options: "rarely," "occasionally," "frequently," and "very frequently."

For both inventories, perception scores were derived by computing factor analyses of responses, using a principal factors approach with varimax rotation. In the case of the children and adolescents, factors emerged that are essentially the same as factors that have emerged in studies using the Schaefer measure with larger numbers of items: Acceptance, Psychological Control, and Firmness of Discipline. For parents' BEI responses, a combination of conceptual and empirical criteria was used to aggregate responses to the inventory items. First, separate factor analyses were computed for mothers' and fathers' responses. Three highly similar factors emerged for mothers and fathers, and these corresponded to categories of issues that are addressed in most theoretical formulations about parent-child relationships in the transition to adolescence: Compliance, Communicativeness, and Task Independence. For both parents and children, items were keyed in a positive direction, and a mean score was computed for the items on each factor.

We found that both parents and adolescents held consistently positive in their perceptions of the other group, with mean scores for all three age groups falling above the midpoint of possible scores. This similarity across grades may reflect the homogeneity and relative affluence of this sample. The finding is consistent, however, with repeated findings of

continued positive bonds between parents and offspring during adolescence and extends these results by indicating that relatively positive perceptions occur across age groups within this period.

A second notable finding is that perceptions differed from one age group to another on several broad, general dimensions, but were quite similar across groups on other dimensions. As Figure 2 shows, at each successive grade level, adolescents were less likely to perceive their parents as accepting of their behaviors, although members of the three age groups had similar perceptions of their parents with respect to the amount of psychological control parents exercised over them and the imposition of firm discipline. Males' and females' perceptions were similar on these points.

Similarly, Figure 3 shows that mothers perceived their children's behaviors quite differently across the three age groups on the dimensions of communication and of compliance, but perceived task independence similarly across these same groups.

Figures 2 & 3 about here

Finally, we found that potentially meaningful differences emerged in perceptions of and by mothers and fathers. Both preadolescents and adolescents made distinctions between the reactions of their mothers and their fathers toward them. Regardless of age or gender, adolescents perceived their mothers to be more accepting toward them than they perceived their fathers to be. In this respect, our findings differ from research findings on mother-child and father-child relations in early life,

where the emphasis has been on the ways in which mothers and fathers are similar (e.g., as persons with whom infants can form secure, stable attachments, and as competent caregivers). The differences are consistent, however, with recently reported results in middle-childhood and adolescence in which mothers' interactions with and responses to children differ from fathers' in both kind and frequency (see review by Collins & Russell, 1991).

Mothers and fathers also differed in their perceptions of adolescents' behavior at different ages. Mothers of eighth graders perceived less communicativeness and less compliance in their own children than did mothers of fifth and eleventh graders. By contrast, fathers' perceptions of communication and compliance for these same children were similar at all three grades. These findings are consistent with popular beliefs and a growing body of research evidence that perturbations in parent-child relationships may be most keenly experienced by mothers (e.g., Hetherington, 1989; Hill, 1988; Patterson, 1982). Differences in mothers' and fathers' perceptions and expectancies may indicate different knowledge of base rates of children's interpersonal behaviors. There may also be important differences in mothers' and fathers' concepts of the meaning and significance of behaviors of children and adolescents (Collins & Russell, 1991). To date, most research on parents' knowledge of behavior has focussed on mothers; thus, the present findings raise questions both about the nature of fathers' expectancies and perceptions and their likely implications for understanding changes in parent-adolescent interactions (Collins, 1992).

Discrepancies between Perceptions and Expectancies

With these age-related differences in adolescents' and parents' perceptions as background, I turn to the second question derived from our integrative model of relationship change: Do these perceptions violate expectancies about behavior? Of primary interest is the possibility that violations of expectancies might be especially likely at times of marked changes, such as the transition to adolescence. Several theorists have hypothesized that expectancy violations should be a particularly powerful predictor of negative feelings about family interactions and family atmosphere for both parents and offspring. In the case of adolescents, the critical discrepancy has been thought to arise from children's idealizations of parent behavior or their beliefs about how typical parents would behave and their judgment that their own families do not conform to these expectancies. This discrepancy has been considered especially likely in early adolescence, because of incomplete transitions to formal reasoning (Elkind, 1967). Psychoanalytic theorists (Blos, 1962, 1979) have also suggested that a deidealization process takes place in early adolescence in which sharper differentiations are made between one's own parents and the image of ideal individuals to which their behaviors have previously been assimilated. In the case of parents, we predicted that variance from highly valued socialization goals or perceptions of the norms would be perceived as an indication of failure in their parental responsibilities (Collins, 1992).

These discrepancy hypotheses were tested in data from two additional procedures in our studies of parents and adolescents. In addition to age-group differences in perceptions, we examined two categories of expectancies. One, category-based expectancies, refers to normative

expectancies associated with membership in a particular age group or social-role category; for example, being 13 years old evokes expectancies in many societies, regardless of each individual's previous behavior. The second, value or goal-based expectancies, refers to implicit standards of behavior derived from general values or goals for socialization, without regard to individual history or the typicality of behavior (e.g., the distinction between values of conformity and values of self-direction [Kohn, 1963]). To assess these expectancies, we asked subjects to complete the measures of perceptions four additional times. Adolescents completed the Child's Report of Parent Behavior once each while imagining typical mothers and typical fathers (measures of categorical expectancies) and the ideal mother and the ideal father (measures of value or goal-based expectancies). Parents completed the Behavior Expectancies Inventory for a typical child and for the ideal child of the age and sex of their own child. These additional measures were completed in a different testing session than the measures of perceptions of actual behavior. Order of the typical and ideal responses were counterbalanced across subjects and were separated by intervening activities to minimize response sets.

Results showed that, for adolescents, discrepancies between perceptions of actual parent behavior and expectancies regarding ideal behaviors were greater for 14 and 17 year olds than for 11 year olds on the acceptance and psychological autonomy factors. Subjects in all three age groups, however, perceived their parents as conforming to their expectancies regarding the behavior of typical parents.

For parents, expectancies for ideal youngsters on the communication and compliance items were more positive, overall, than their perceptions of

actual behavior on those items. For mothers, though not for fathers, the discrepancies were greater at eighth grade than at fifth and eleventh grades. Expectancies of typical children of the same age and gender as their own offspring were less positive than perceptions of actual behavior at grades five and eleven. At eighth grade, typical expectancies and actual perceptions were similar to each other and were less positive than in the younger and older age groups.

These findings are consistent with the prediction that perceptions of actual behavior are more likely to violate expectancies about ideal behavior in adolescence than in preadolescence. Because the data are cross-sectional, however, we can only speculate that perceptions would be relatively discrepant in early adolescence and increasingly more congruent at later ages.

Expectancies and Family Functioning

A related question is whether perceptions and violations of expectancies are associated with other aspects of relationships between parents and adolescents. To address the question, adolescents and each member of the 69 pairs of parents in our study separately rated their families on the Family Assessment Measure (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1983). This inventory, which was derived from a process model of family functioning, includes subscales dealing with conflict and problem-solving, communication, affective expression, role performance, affective involvement, control, and values and norms.

To estimate the relation between family functioning and parents' and adolescents' perceptions and expectancies, we computed multiple regressions in which perceptions of own parents or own offspring were entered first, followed by expectancies of either typical or ideal parent/offspring. For

adolescents, perceptions of one's own parents on the factors of Acceptance and Psychological Autonomy/Control accounted for 20-36% of the variance in perceptions of family functioning. For parents, perceptions of one's own offspring accounted for a significant, but relatively small proportion of the variance in reports of family functioning (10 percent). For both parents and adolescents, adding ideal or typical expectancies improved prediction of family functioning only negligibly.

These findings imply that perceptions of own parents or own offspring are significant components of parent-child relationships, but that discrepancies between perceptions and expectancies regarding typical or ideal members of the category are less important. This initial null finding on a key prediction from the integrative model of change may be due to one of several limitations in this first phase of the research. The restricted range of scores in this homogeneous, generally well functioning sample may have been poorly suited to hypothesis-testing using regression models. It is also quite likely that the Family Assessment Measure was affected by diverse factors independent of or only indirectly related to parent-child relationships. For example, in the case of parents, marital relationship sand economic and occupational stresses may be powerful determinants of assessments of family functioning; and adolescents' scores may be affected by sibling conflicts or concerns about parents' marital tensions.

To approach this linkage in a more differentiated way, my student Kirsten Schoenleber (1988) asked the sample of parents to complete the Behavioral Expectancies Inventory once again on a separate occasion. Both parents were asked to indicate how frequently during the past week the

behavior described in each item had been been associated with two different types of conflict: overt conflict, in which arguments actually occurred between themselves and their child; and covert conflict, in which they felt dissatisfaction, tension, or anger, but did not engage in an open argument about it. She found that parents' perceptions of compliance and communicativeness were associated with both overt and covert conflict. The group of parents who perceived their children to be lowest in compliance and communicativeness reported significantly more high overt and high covert conflict than those of parents in the other three groups.

Schoenleber examined this correlation more closely by inspecting subsets of BEI items. The subsets were based on two separate ratings of the items. In the first rating procedure, a group of independent judges assessed whether each item referred to a positive or a negative behavior. In the second rating, parents themselves indicated the degree to which each item was either of low or high importance to them. Schoenleber's analysis showed that, when behaviors were rated as important, parents' perceptions of their children on the negative behaviors were high and were positively correlated with reports of overt and covert conflict; and perceptions on positive behaviors were both high and negatively correlated with the two conflict measures. For the low-importance behaviors, the correlations were in the same direction, but were statistically nonsignificant.

Summary Comment

These initial studies have provided three bases for further research on behavioral expectancies and their significance for changes in parent-child relationships. First, some broad, general dimensions of parents' perceptions differ from one age group to another and are differentiated as a function of parent gender. Second, these perceptions are associated with

self-reported incidence of conflict and with global assessments of family functioning, particularly when behaviors are rated as important. Third, discrepancies between expectancies and perceptions are greater in adolescence than in the preadolescent years, indicating that violations of expectancies are especially likely to increase during periods of rapid developmental change. The parallel findings with adolescents and parents further indicates the need for a bilateral or transactional model of change, rather than a unidirectional model emphasizing either child maturation or parent factors.

Issues for Further Research

The questions of interest in this research were concerned with adaptation of close relationships to the physical, social, and cognitive transitions of early adolescence. Similar questions could be asked about changes in relationships at any of several major developmental transition points. For example, adaptations are required in parent-child relationships during the first two years of life (Breger, 1974) and when adult children assume the care of aging, increasingly dependent, and perhaps impaired parents (Wynne, 1984). Other adaptations undoubtedly occur more subtly and over relatively longer periods. Late childhood and the very early period of adolescence are opportune for tracing the processes of adaptation, because changes in individuals and their mutual expectancies are likely to be both frequent and salient enough to be detectable in research.

Looking ahead to further research on relationships during transition periods, three issues must be given particular attention. One is the issue of how best to characterize the nature and processes of change. A second

is the question of whether change processes follow similar patterns across subgroups in the population. A third is specifying differences among families that may be particularly significant to the ability of parents and offspring to negotiate relationship changes with optimal results.

The Nature and Processes of Change

The primary issue is how and in what ways conjoint functioning changes, while attachments are maintained. Although I have outlined a general process whereby successive realignments of expectancies can occur, several points should be considered further.

Individual change and relational implications. First, there is a need to examine individual changes in terms of their significance for changes in relationships. In the case of the transition to adolescence, the most likely individual changes -- pubertal maturation, cognitive maturation, and age-graded social and cultural expectations -- are of considerable interest in their own right. The contributions of these changes to transformations in relationships have been addressed only in a fragmentary way.

A key remaining question is whether puberty and age are direct causes of distinctive intrapsychic and social pressures or are simply surrogate indicators of accumulated stresses experienced by adolescents that impinge on interactions with parents. Simmons and her collaborators (Simmons, Burgeson, & Reef, 1983; Simmons & Blyth, 1987) have reported that adolescents who are experiencing several significant changes simultaneously are at greater risk for reduced self-esteem, diminished school performance, and impaired parent-child relationships, compared to adolescents who are experiencing relatively little change. For example, girls who change schools between sixth and seventh grade are also frequently in the midst of their most rapid period of pubertal change; if they also are beginning to

date, or if there are difficulties at home, these girls often show lowered self-esteem, compared to girls who only experience the school change or only experience school change and pubertal change. From this viewpoint the effects of multiple stressors, not merely the occurrence of a normative physical change such as menarche, must be studied as a contributor to changes in parent-child relationships. Identifying proximal factors in relationship change will require longitudinal research in which significant life events, including pubertal and age-graded structural changes, are tracked in connection with information about relationships (Collins, 1990).

Adult developmental issues may also have an instigative and/or exacerbating effect in relationship changes. Coping with midlife personal, marital, and occupational stresses may affect parents' responses to the changes of adolescence and also parents' reactivity, emotional state, and level of distraction from the tasks of parenting (e.g., Aldous, 1979; Rossi, 1987; Silverberg, 1989a,b). Silverberg & Steinberg (1990) have recently reported that parents' orientation to their paid work roles affect the impact of adolescent changes. When orientation toward work is weak, adolescent changes are often associated with a low sense of well-being; but when work orientation is strong, adolescent changes are often positively associated with well-being.

Mechanisms of change. Perceptions and expectancies of others' behavior are viewed as significant mechanisms whereby multiple changes -- biological, social, emotional, and cognitive -- affect parent-child relationships during the transition to adolescence. Evidence that violations of expectancies are more likely during the transition to adolescence, however, leaves open the question of whether cognitive factors

contribute to change in parent-adolescent relationships. To address this question, a broader focus is needed on aspects of cognition that may affect the expectancies that underlie parent-child interactions. For example, age-related changes may elicit different attributions about the causes of child behaviors than parents have made at earlier points in development. Dix, Ruble, Grusec, & Nixon (1986) compared adults' responses to hypothetical misbehaviors by children and adolescents and found that the older the child, the more likely parents were to infer that the child understood that certain behaviors are wrong, that the transgression was intentional, and that the behavior indicated negative dispositions in the child. Furthermore, when parents inferred that the child was capable of self-control and that the misbehavior was intentional, they were more upset with the child, and they thought punishment, rather than discussion and explanation, was a more appropriate response. In short, transgressions by adolescents have a different significance than transgressions by younger children (Dix, Ruble, & Zambarano, 1989).

Expectancies and their interpersonal implications may also be affected by a variety of beliefs and assumptions about persons, relationships, and social roles. For example, parents' responses to violated expectancies are likely to be affected by whether the violation is relevant to parents' socialization goals or to an implicit developmental timetable (i.e., whether the behavior is "off-time"). Of particular interest are the degree to which expectancy violations are perceived to signal difficulties with the relationship and parents' beliefs about who bears the responsibility for assuring maintenance of positive relationships and how relationship problems might be redressed (Collins, 1992; Goodnow & Collins, 1990).

Research is needed to specify the role of the "cognitive context" of expectancy violations as mediators of relationship changes.

It should be noted that, in this perspective, discontinuity is essential for developmental change. This view has been a major theme in the study of developmental psychology. Cognitive-developmental theories like Piaget's (1981) imply that moderate inconsistency provides the impetus for change; and with particular reference to adolescence, Anna Freud (1958, 1969) and Peter Blos (1979) are among several theorists who have argued that perturbation is a feature of healthy growth. From a systems theory perspective, Lyman Wynne has noted:

> Although prolonged, intense instability or divergence will surely impair or disrupt relatedness, divergence that is contextually and developmentally appropriate is necessary as a decisive stimulus for moving on to the next level or form of relating (Wynne, 1984, p. 301).

The questions for further research are: How much and what kinds of discontinuity are optimal, and under what conditions are harmonious relationships at risk from marked discontinuity?

Relationship Change and Social-Structural Diversity

The integrative model of change in relationships outlined in this chapter is assumed to be applicable to all normally functioning families, but it is derived largely from theory and research oriented to white, two-parent, middle-class North American families. A full understanding of the processes by which transformations occur will require an examination of transformations from a variety of social and cultural niches. The current empirical basis for doing so is sparse and uneven. Socioeconomic status differences in socialization values have long been asserted (Kohn, 1963),

for example, but the implications for the nature of conjoint parent-child patterns have not been studied. Little information is now available from which to infer the appropriateness of the model to African-American, Native-American, Asian-American, or Hispanic-American adolescents and families or about appropriateness to non-North American societies and cultures.

In the case of subcultural variations, one source of pressure on the model comes from the multiple systems of expectations into which minority-group children are typically socialized (Boykin & Toms, 1985; Harrison, Serafica, & McAdoo, 1984; McAdoo & McAdoo, 1985). Boykin & Toms (1985) note that Afro-American parents in the U. S. face a "triple quandary" in the need to socialize their children to sometimes mutually conflicting agendas from mainstream white culture, minority culture, and the African-American culture. Behavioral expectancies may be more diverse and subtle under such conditions, and violations may require more subtly differentiated perceptions and responses.

Sources of social-structural diversity also include the number of parents involved in socialization and the relative degree of their involvement. An increasing number of households in the U. S. are composed of one or more children and a single resident parent. In some cases these families may actually include two parents, one of which is nonresident; or there may be additional resident adults who are neither biological nor stepparents of the children or adolescents. Although little is known about the characteristics of relationships in such households, several recent studies have documented differences between mother-only households and those with two resident parents. For example, adolescents in mother-only households are more likely to make decisions without parental input and are

more likely to be involved indeviant behavior than adolescents in the comparison households (Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf, & Gross, 1985; Steinberg, 1987). Studies of expectancies and attributions associated with greater autonomy in decision-making and differential orientation to parents and peers are needed to clarify the relational implications of these patterns.

Relationship Change and Variations in Family Functioning

Finally, attention is needed to the characteristics of families that make it possible for parents and children to adapt to changes in each other. Most research on parent-child relations has focused on the child-rearing attitudes and actions of parents and methods of control and regulation of children's behavior. Although begun within a unidirectional perspective emphasizing effects of parents on children, this research has recently given greater attention to the qualities of typical exchanges between parents and children, with particular attention to patterns of communication, responsiveness, and firmness of socialization demands (Baumrind, 1989; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). A repeated finding is that developmentally appropriate independence, achievement orientation, and social responsibility are associated with authoritative patterns, characterized by warm relationships in which individuals are permitted to express opinions and assert individuality and in which parents expect mature behavior and set and enforce reasonable rules and standards (Hill, 1987; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg, 1990). Contrasting authoritarian, permissive, and/or neglectful parent-child patterns are consistently associated with less positive developmental outcomes.

Although no studies have focused relationship qualities in families characterized by these different patterns of control, it is reasonable to speculate that constructive, developmentally beneficial responses to violated expectancies would be most likely in authoritative families. Differences between authoritative and less optimal patterns would be particularly likely when violations become more likely, as in a major developmental transition.

Conclusions

Changes in relationships at adolescence reflect a process in which parents and children frequently violate and modify expectancies of each other as they move toward an accommodation to altered physical, social, and cognitive characteristics in the child. These changing expectancies are both the basis for, and the result of, frequent interruptions in the interdependent relationships between them. Although the evidence is still meager, a framework for research is emerging that may be extended to other developmental periods and to other significant relationships in the lives of developing individuals.

Several issues must be addressed in future research derived from this approach. One is a continued emphasis on the study of multiple aspects of relationships and the interrelations between them. Another is continual reference to theoretical models of change processes, addressing the aspects of relationships that are believed to be especially important in to adapting to changes in the individual participants in relationships. Finally, attention is needed to whether and how the processes of change are manifested in different social groups and in families marked by varying characteristics of individuals -- both parents and children -- and their systemic relations. By studying parents and children during major

developmental transitions, we may be able to better understand the processes of change that drive development not only in individuals, but in the relationships of which they are a part.

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BIOPSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL

OF CHANGE IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADOLESCENCE

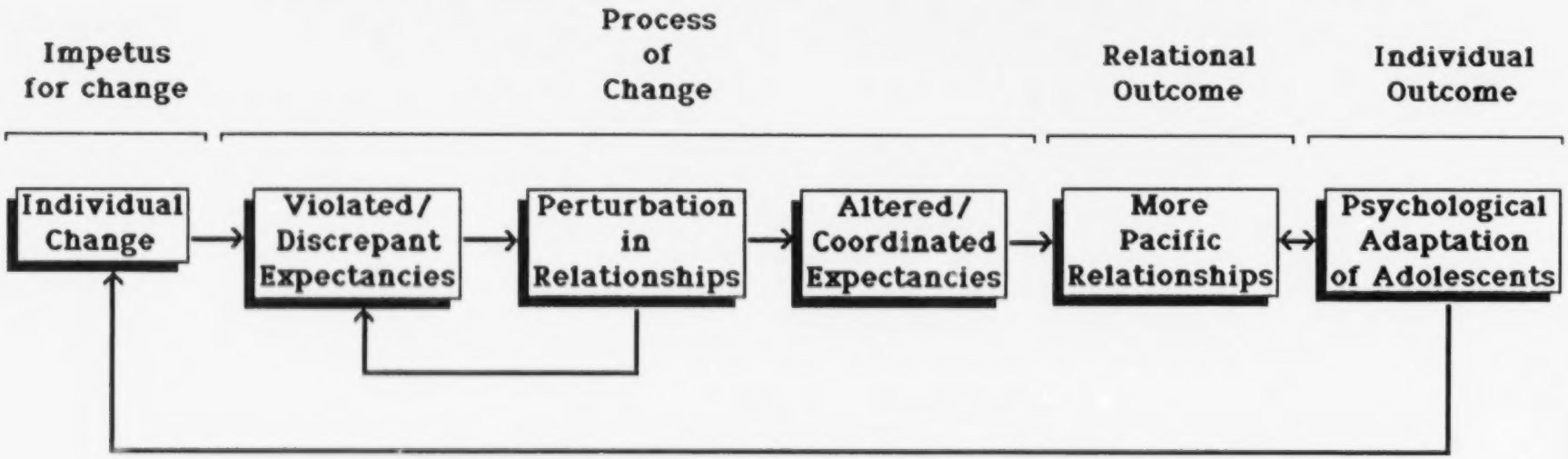
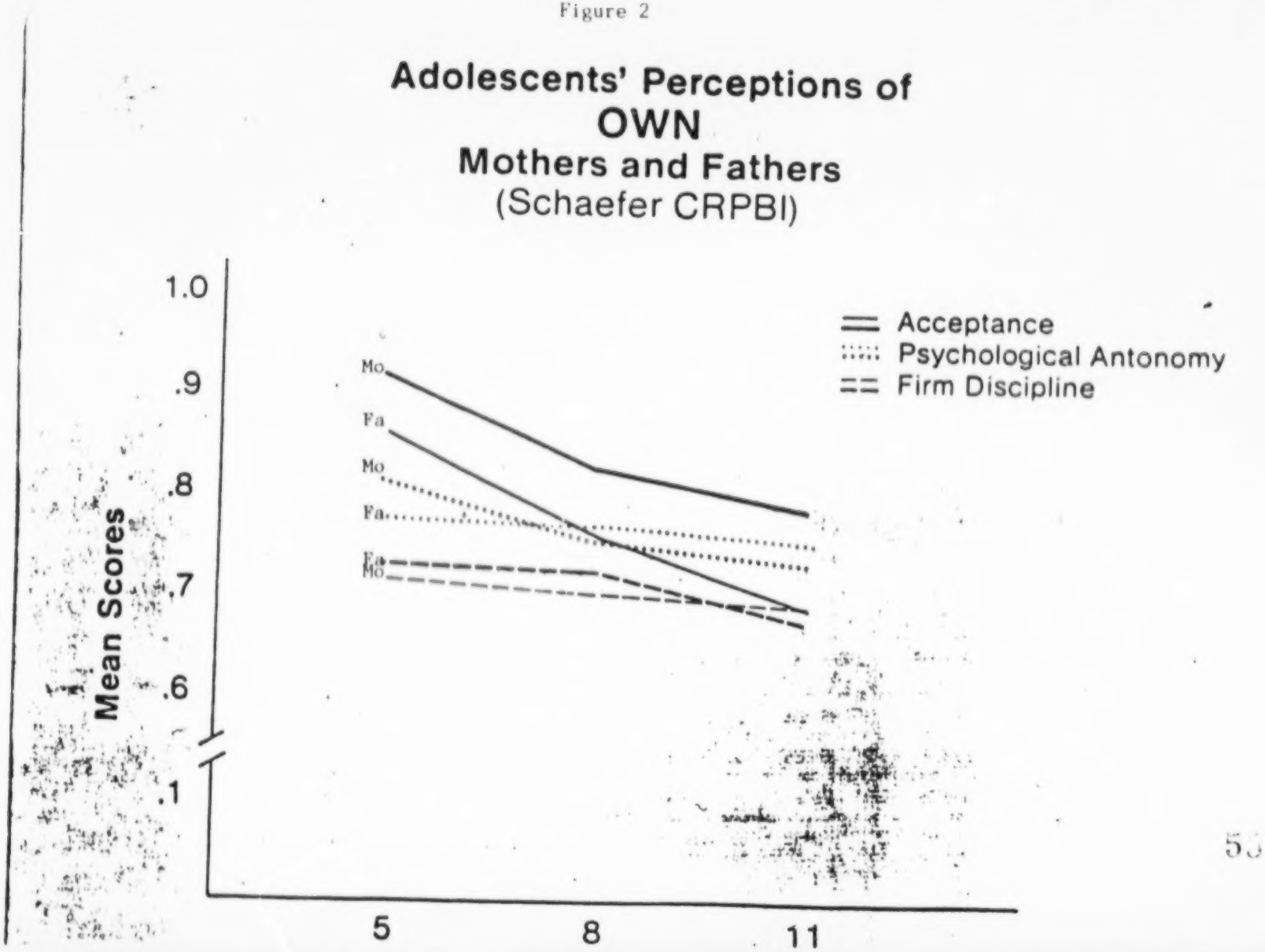


Figure 2


Adolescents' Perceptions of
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(Schaefer CRPBI)
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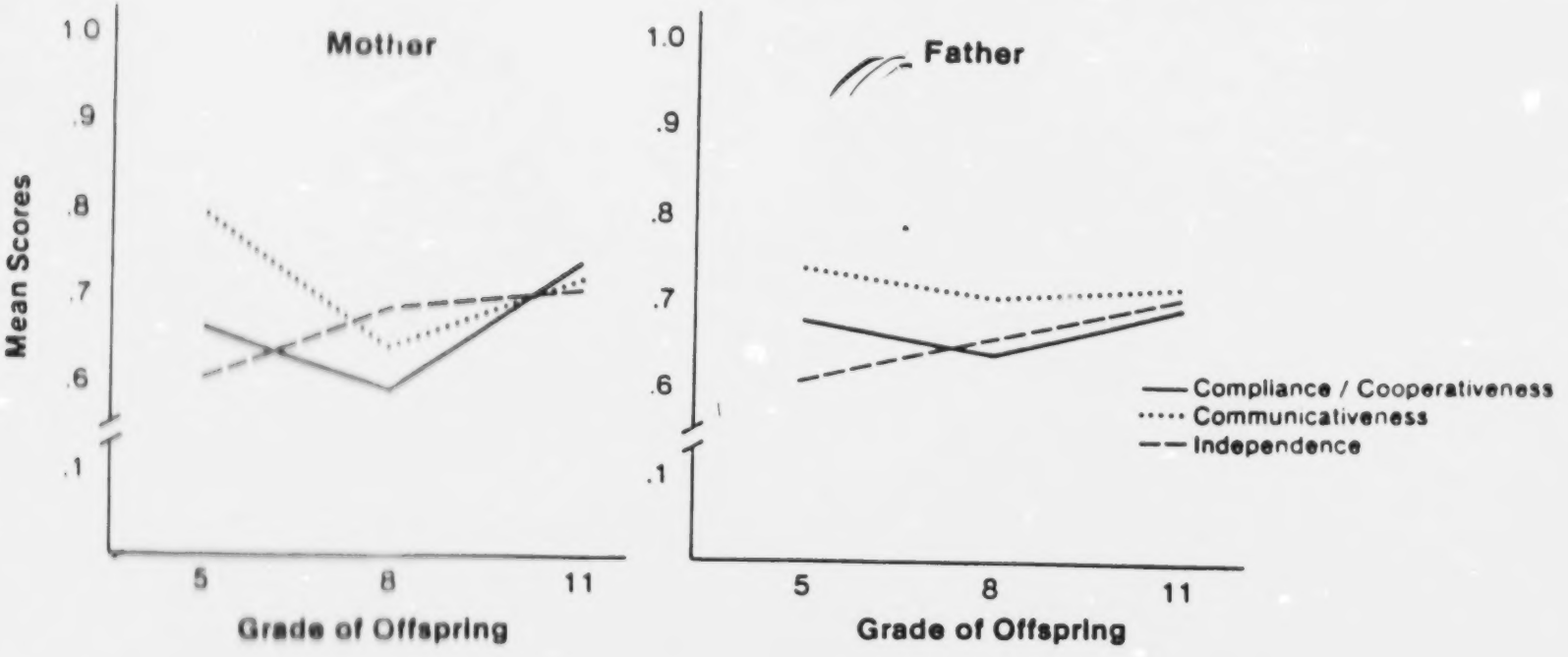
Figure 3

Parents' Behavioral Expectations For OWN Child



(Schoenleber & Collins)